

**REMARKS/ARGUMENTS**

In response to the Office Action dated October 3, 2007, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration.

**Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103**

**Claims 1-5, 11-13, and 17**

Claims 1-5, 11-13 and 17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Pat. No. 4,951,543 (Cipriani) in view of U.S. Pat. App. Pub. No. 20050150347 (Hannes).

Applicant respectfully asserts that claims 1-5, 11-13, and 17 are patentable over Cipriani in view of Hannes. Independent claim 1 recites a stringed instrument comprising a solid body, a retainer block encompassed by a rear surface of the body, and a plurality of strings retained by the retainer block. Cipriani discusses an acoustic guitar 1 with a bridge arrangement including an undersurface cross bar brace 20 (FIG. 4B). The brace 20 is disposed on a rear surface of a sound board cover 8, i.e., on the inside of the hollow guitar 1. Cipriani shows a piece embedded in the brace 20, which the Examiner equated to the recited retainer block. Hannes discusses a bridge element 10 mounted on an instrument body 510, shown in FIG. 8 as being solid, with strings 600 extending through holes 520 and through individual retaining nuts 540. ¶ [0127]. The strings 600 do not extend through a retainer block encompassed by a rear surface of the body 510. It would not have been obvious to combine Cipriani's brace 20 with into Hannes as suggested by the Examiner because (1) Cipriani repeatedly indicates that his invention is for hollow-body instruments (Abstract; Col. 2, ll. 33-35) and (2) changing from the nuts 540 discussed in Hannes to Cipriani's brace 20 would change the tonal characteristics of Hannes' instrument, possibly not desirably. It would not be obvious to use a device "to provide a better and structurally simple mechanism for retaining the strings on the solid body of the [Hannes] instrument" if that would mean changing the tonal characteristics of the instrument. The improvement of "resonant characteristics of the sound board and the overall tonal quality of

the instrument" noted by the Examiner, citing Cipriani's abstract, are directed to hollow-body instruments specified in Cipriani. All improvements of hollow-body instruments do not necessarily translate to improvements in solid-body instruments, and thus it is not obvious to incorporate Cipriani's brace 20 into Hannes' instrument. Further, as Cipriani is directed to hollow-body instruments, the use of Cipriani's brace 20 was not intended, and is not suggested, by Cipriani to be used in solid-body instruments. For at least these reasons, independent claim 1 is, and claims 2-5, 11-13, and 17 that depend from claim 1 are, not obvious in view of Cipriani and Hannes.

Further, claim 17 is not obvious at least for the additional reason that neither Cipriani nor Hannes teach, disclose, or suggest, alone or in combination, the recited slot. Claim 17 recites that the plurality of strings extend through a slot defined in the solid body. Cipriani does not discuss a slot for the strings to pass into the sound body beneath the sound board. Hannes shows an individual string 600 extending through an individual hole 520, not a slot through which a plurality of strings extend as recited.

#### Claims 6-10 and 14-16

Claims 6-10 and 14-16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Cipriani in view of Hannes in view of U.S. Pat. No. 5,260,505 (Kendall).

Applicant respectfully asserts that claims 6-10 and 14-16 are patentable over Cipriani in view of Hannes in view of Kendall. Kendall does not make up for the deficiencies noted with respect to Cipriani and Hannes and thus claims 6-10 and 14-16, that depend from claim 1, are patentable over Cipriani in view of Hannes in view of Kendall for at least the reasons discussed above.

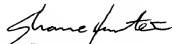
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**CONCLUSION**

In view of the foregoing, Applicants believe all claims now pending in this Application are in condition for allowance. The issuance of a formal Notice of Allowance at an early date is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, please telephone the undersigned at 858-350-6100.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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